

**To: The Honorable John Kissel, Co-Chair
The Honorable Mary Mushinsky, Co-Chair
Members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee**

From: Marc S. Herzog, Chancellor

**Re: Connecticut Community Colleges of Connecticut
Response to Staff Briefing on:
The Alignment of Postsecondary Education and Employment**

Date: October 6, 2009

A very important part of the comprehensive mission of Connecticut's Community Colleges is workforce development. However, the focus of the report appears to be for the most part on the Connecticut Community Colleges, with only passing references to the State University System, the University of Connecticut, Charter Oak State College or the Connecticut Technical High Schools all of which, along with private colleges and universities, play important roles in providing the skilled workforce needed to support Connecticut's economic development.

The report does describe in some detail the extensive partnerships between the community colleges and the state's employers including a list of the business and industry affiliations of the members of our Board of Trustees and of the members who serve on the Regional Advisory Boards and Program Advisory councils that exist at each of our Community Colleges.

The report also cites "numerous examples of successful programs that align students and graduates of the Connecticut Community Colleges with the skills needed by Connecticut employers," and singles out Asnuntuck Community College for praise as a result of its development of a Precision Machining curriculum in response to the needs of local industries and Chambers of Commerce.

We'd like also to mention another particularly significant example of community college efforts to respond to employer demand and to serve the workforce needs of the state especially in shortage areas. That would be the addition of a new nursing program at Gateway Community College beginning in 2004 and the introduction of a coordinated Nursing curriculum at all five community colleges offering nursing that has reduced waiting lists and increased the number of nursing graduates between 2004 and 2009 by over third.

The development of these programs and many others illustrates the responsiveness of our colleges in assessing business and community needs, developing partnerships and resources to offer the programs and services most in demand. These programs are supported by our Board of Trustees through their system wide program development and approval process which is

The problems described in the report related to the academic achievement gaps faced by many of Connecticut's students, with "CT's scores showing the widest gap between higher and lower income student in the entire country, outside of Washington DC, " is indeed a daunting challenge for every sector of the Connecticut economy and for every community. This troubling statistic is certainly reflected in what the report describes as Connecticut's " lower than expected production of students earning associate degrees." It should be noted that the number of degrees and certificates awarded by the Community Colleges as a whole, between 2000 and 2006, has increased by 13%. The most recent statistics indicate that degrees awarded increased between 2008 and 2009 by 9.6%.

One way to address the issue of low degree production would be to seriously consider the recommendations submitted in response to P.A. 07-09 in the Community College Graduation Rate Improvement Plan. As the PRI report indicates, the "plan recommends innovative educational strategies, financial aid incentives, and transfer incentives, many of which require additional funding." These strategies include increasing the number of full-time faculty at our colleges because of the special role of faculty in program development and oversight, accreditation, and student engagement. There is also a critical need to increase the number of staff providing direct support to students in terms of academic and career advising, tutoring, counseling, and support in libraries and laboratories. Scholarships particularly for community college students would encourage their pursuit of further education and would provide significant encouragement for persistence, completion of degrees, and transfer to sister colleges.

Not considered in the report, and mentioned only in passing, are the large numbers of non-credit programs offered by the community colleges, nearly 50% of which are related to professional development and workforce development. While these are largely short-term, non-credit programs that don't lead to a degree or certificate, they do improve and upgrade skills helping students to stay current with changing technologies and job requirements, or to gain the skills needed for career advancement or new careers as the economy changes. In addition, our colleges provide both training and education in partnership with over 600 of the state's businesses and industries through our Business and Industry Services Network through programs that can range from needs assessment and customized programs to full certificate and degree programs delivered on site, on-line or on campus. Many states provide funding support for non-credit programs as part of their economic development and workforce development initiatives and these programs would also be worth further exploration for adoption in Connecticut. The Connecticut Association for Human Services has recently issued a report advocating for funding for non-credit programs at the community colleges and for many of the proposals in the Graduation Rate Improvement plan submitted to the General Assembly in 2008.

The PRI report indicates that "Federal initiatives may come to fruition promoting attendance at Community Colleges." It is important to note that even if approved, the much heralded new funding from the Federal government will not eliminate the financial problems faced by public higher education in the long term and that Federal funding cannot be used to supplant other state support. Only fundamental changes to the State's priorities and its allocation of funding to support those priorities can rectify underfunding of the educational services essential to ensuring long term prosperity for Connecticut and its citizens. An article in The New England Journal of Higher Education, Summer 2009, reports that "state governments need to meet their

completion. At Community Colleges over 90% of student financial aid is in the form of grants, including 15% of tuition that is set aside for scholarships. This grant focused approach avoids student indebtedness and encourages both attendance and completion by reducing the financial barriers faced by many students and their families.

We would suggest investment in need based financial aid and other innovative academic innovations and student services that are proving to be most effective in improving student persistence and success in college-level study. Many of these innovations are being implemented and tested at Connecticut's Community Colleges as a result of our participation in the national Achieving the Dream initiative. Currently, funding for the development of new programs and academic innovations is funded largely from external sources and grants such as Achieving the Dream and the U.S. Department of Labor.

It is true that higher education is increasingly being asked to provide non-academic support services. As the report mentions, "evidence suggests that students, particularly at community colleges have more social service needs, because they are often older, part-time, commuters, disadvantaged and underprepared for college success and have added responsibilities. The report suggests further that, "shifting resources to address some of these non-traditional needs in an academic setting should be examined..."

In this examination, special consideration should be given to the innovative programs implemented through grant funding that address the barriers faced by many of Connecticut's students, including the need for developmental education. Many successful models exist in Connecticut and in other states such as Kentucky, Washington, North and South Carolina where state resources are employed to respond directly to the needs of business and industry for workforce training. In some cases, states fund non-credit programs or create workforce development funds, often administered by community colleges, in order to attract and retain business investment to their states.

The recent report issued by the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CHAS), Connecticut's Challenge: Preparing our Workforce ... Strengthening Community Colleges, copies of which I will leave for the committee to read, includes some of the most innovative of these programs that are focused on helping students to succeed.

I know that we all share the same goal and I assure you that you can rely on the continued and extensive efforts of Connecticut's Community Colleges to ensure that students are prepared to succeed at the college-level study needed as preparation for careers in Connecticut's Knowledge Economy.

Program Development

2004-2008

Reallocating Resources & Responding to Needs

- 34 new Associate Degree Programs
- 64 new Program Options
- 88 new Certificate Programs
- 50 Substantive Program Modifications
- 109 Degree or Option or Certificate terminations

Responding to diverse workforce needs

- Healthcare Sector (Nursing and Allied Health)
- Service Sector (Early Childhood Ed and Criminal Justice)
- Technology (Automotive Technology and Digital Arts)
- Engineering (Laser and Fiber Optics, and Environmental)
- Manufacturing Sector (Precision, Lean, and Supply Chain)
- Information Technology (Computer Information Systems)

Responding to diverse student needs

Education That Works For a Lifetime

- Adults preparing for jobs or changing careers
- Ages 18-22 preparing for the 21st century workforce
- Dislocated workers
- Incumbent workers
- All ages with limited literacy skills or non-native English speakers
- Returning military and service members
- State employees through the In-Service Program
- High School Partnership and dual enrollment students